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ABSTRACT

This course description lists a sequence of units focusing on how aging affects an individual's ability to communicate. Besides general information about the course organization, specific information is provided on four short papers, in which students defend their views on critical issues of communication and aging, and on seven units of study. Topics for the units of study include (1) the centrality of communication (images of elders and the aging process), (2) physiological changes that mitigate effective communication, (3) social service programs that facilitate human interaction, (4) interpersonal communication and aging, (5) family communication and aging, (6) the taboo topics of death and sexualtiy, and (7) mass communication and aging. The descriptions of the units of study all contain brief overviews and lists of instructional materials (readings and audiovisual aids). A list of five general resources on communication and aging are appended. (RL)

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PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATION AND AGING*

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Course Name: Speech 6006 Communicative Aspects of Aging

Course Level and Credit: four quarter hours of graduate credit

Course Text: Oyer, Herbert J., and E. Jane Oyer. Aging and Communication. Baltimore: University Park Press, 1976

Course Description:

The course focuses on elders' use of mass media and interpersonal channels of communication. Major theories of aging are reviewed. Physiological changes that influence the individual's ability to communicate effectively are discussed. Social service programs that facilitate interaction are examined.

Units of Study:

1½ weeks	Unit One:	The Centrality of Communication: Images of Elders and the Aging Process
1 week	Unit Two:	Physiological Changes that Mitigate Effective Communication
2 weeks	Unit Three:	Social Service Programs that Facilitate Human Interaction
2 weeks	Unit Four:	Interpersonal Communication and Aging
1 week	Unit Five:	Family Communication and Aging
1 week	Unit Six:	The Taboo Topics of Death and Sexuality
1½ weeks	Unit Seven:	Mass Communication and Aging

Assignments:

-two examinations covering readings, films, lectures, and class discussions.

-four short papers in which the student defends his/her views on critical communication and aging issues. (See pages 2 and 3 for details.)

*Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, 12 November 1980 in New York City.

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Papers

Think Paper One

Develop your own theory of aging. What are the essential elements or steps in the aging process? How do they relate to communication patterns? What constitutes normal aging? What constitutes healthy aging? Ideally, how should an elder behave?

What part, if any, does society play in the aging process? What part, if any, do significant others play? What part does the individual play? You may develop your own theory or combine published theories. Base your arguments on readings, lectures, films, class discussions, and personal experience. Please describe your theory and defend your choice(s).

Think Paper Two

Various social service agencies name the following as need area of the aged:

- financial services
- health services
- legal services
- housing
- transportation
- nutrition and diet
- emergency food and shelter
- recreation
- educational programs
- counseling services

Design and describe an ideal social service program to meet at least one of these areas. Address the following concerns in your paper:

Are elders' needs in this area different from other persons? How so? How will your program address these special needs? How will your program provide options for elders who experience varying degrees of need? How will your program provide easy linkages to other social services?

How will your program provide opportunities for elders to maintain independence? Will your program provide opportunities for elders to be productive? How so?

How will your program provide opportunities for varying degrees of social interaction? How will the program facilitate interaction between elders? What steps will be taken to arouse community support for the program? How could elders and young people be involved in this process?

Think Paper Three

Should you change your interpersonal communication style when interacting with (1)older relatives and (2) other elders? Why or why not? If so, how? Cite relevant material from readings, lectures, etc. as you discuss and defend your answer.

Think Paper Four

Should mass media change programs to either (1) present a more realistic view of aging and/or (2) accomodate the programming needs and desires of elders? Why or why not? If so, how? Cite relevant material from readings. lectures, etc. Both rational and ethical concerns should be addressed in your answer.

Unite One: The Centrality of Communication: Images of Elders and Aging

This unit introduces the interface between communication and gerontology. Major theories of aging are presented and their focus on communication is discussed. Common myths and stereotypes of aging are explored in light of their ability to detrimentally affect the communication process. Students complete Oberleder's Attitude Toward Aging Scale and responses are discussed in class.

Brubaker, Timothy H., and Edward A. Powers. "The Stereotype of 'Old': A Review and Alternative Approach." Journal of Gerontology, 31 (1976), 441-447.

Busse, Ewald W. "Theories of Aging." In Behavior and Adaption in Late Life. Ed. Ewald W. Busse and Eric Pfeiffer. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969, pp. 11-32.

Carmichael, Carl W. "Communication and Gerontology: Interfacing Disciplines." Western Journal of Speech Communication, 40 (Spring 1976), 121-129.

Janoff, Clifford, prod. To A Good Long Life. BFA Educational Media, 1976. (Film: three elders, presented as positive models of aging, discuss their lifestyles.)

Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. "Public Attitudes Toward Old Age" And "Public Image of Most People over 65." In The Myth and Reality of Aging in America. Washington, D.C.: National Council on Aging, 1975, pp. 1-69.

McClelland, Paul, David Barnhart, Martha Measells, Laurie Rosenbaum, Susan Rouse, Pam Creek, Martha Sanderson, Dorothy Gannon, and Terry Sanders. "Age and Sex Differences: Toward a Bio-Social Theory of Human Communication." Paper presented at the Fiftieth Annual Convention of the Southern Speech Communication Association, Birmingham, 9 April 1980.

Reality Orientation Program. "Oberleder's Attitude Toward Aging Scale." Tuscaloosa, AL: Tuscaloosa VA Hospital, 1973 (Xerox).

Webb, Lynne. "Explorations in Communication and the Aging Process." Paper presented at the Fiftieth Annual Convention of the Florida Speech Communication Association, Daytona Beach, 17 October 1980.

Unit Two: Physiological Changes that Mitigate Effective Communication

Various physiological changes that accompany normal maturation influence the individual's ability to receive and process messages. Unit two focuses on four such changes: loss of hearing, eye sight, and mobility as well as the need for increased information-processing time. Modes of compensation and/or adaption by the sender and receiver are discussed. Professors of speech pathology and audiology provide guest lectures.

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Communication Disorders and Aging. Rockville, MD: ASLHA, 1980. (Pamphlet)

Clark, Matt, Mary Hager, and Dan Chapiro. "Epidemic of Senility." Newsweek, 5 Nov. 1979, p. 95.

Goldman, Rudi, dir. Age-Related Sensory Changes--An Empathic Approach. University of Michigan Institute for Gerontology, 1975. (Videotape that simulates loss of hearing and eye sight.)

Maurer, James F., and Ralph R. Rupp. "Hearing Impairment in an Elderly Population." In Hearing and Aging: Tactics for Intervention. New York: Grune and Stratton, Inc., 1979, pp. 17-35.

Meyerson, M.D. "The Effects of Aging on Communication." Journal of Gerontology, 31 (1974), pp. 29-36

Moore, Mary E. "Behavioral Changes." In Aging and Society. Vol. I: An Inventory of Research Findings. Ed. Matilda White Riley and Anne Foner. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1968, pp. 241-272.

Unit Three: Social Service Programs that Facilitate Human Interaction

The unit begins with an examination of various philosophical orientations to service delivery. Outstanding local, state, and national programs that facilitate interaction are contrasted to programs that fail to do so. Total-service packages and methods of service linking are emphasized. Field trips and guest lecturers highlight the unit.

Barry, Katharine. "Shape Up, Kiddies." Newsweek, 11 August 1980, p. 13. (A "My Turn" column in which an elder speaks out against condescending social workers.)

Ferrari, Majorie M. "Project Special Grandparents: Effects of Interaction of First Grade Boys and Older Women in a School Setting." Dissertation Abstracts International, 34 (1974), 4864A (Case Western Reserve).

Lopez, Martita A., William J. Hoyer, Arnold P. Goldstein, N. Jane Gershaw, and Robert P. Sprafkin. "Effects of Overlearning and Incentive on the Acquisition and Transfer of Interpersonal Skills with Institutionalized Elderly." Journal of Gerontology, 35 (May 1980), 403-408.

Nuttbrock, Larry, and Jordan 1. Kosberg. "Images of the Physician and Help-Seeking Behavior of the Elderly: A Multivariate Assessment." Journal of Gerontology, 35 (Mar. 1980), 241-248.

O'Brien, John E., and Donna L. Wagner. "Help Seeking by the Frail Elderly: Problems in Network Analysis." The Gerontologist, 20 (Feb. 1980), 78-83.

Osman, David L. "Relative Effects of 'Intimacy' upon Environmental Perception and Adjustment: A Comparative Study of Selected Aged Residents." Dissertation Abstracts International, 34 (1974), 5314A-5315A (University of Michigan).

Sloan, Bernard. "Old Folks at Home." Newsweek, 12 Feb. 1979, pp. 13-14.

Snow, David L., and Judith B. Gordon. "Social Network Analysis and Intervention with the Elderly." The Gerontologist, 20 (Aug. 1980), 463-467.

Watson, W.H. "The Meanings of Touch: Geriatric Nursing." Journal of Communication, 25 (1975), 104-112.

Western, Leone. "Fairhaven College 'Bridge' Spans the Generation Gap." Perspective on Aging, 3 (1974), 9-12.

Unit Four: Interpersonal Communication and Aging

Research findings related to the friending process are reviewed in unit four. Major theories of interpersonal communication are used to identify and understand difficulties in client-service provider interactions. The myth of the "generation gap" is explored.

Blau, Zena S. "Structural Constraints on Friendships in Old Age." American Sociological Review, 26 (June 1961), 429-439.

Bultena Gordon L. "Age-grading in the Social Interaction of an Elderly Male Population." Journal of Gerontology, 23 (1968), 539-543.

Cameron, Paul, and Arthur Cromer. "Generational Homophyly." Journal of Gerontology, 29 (1974), 232-236.

Cohen, Carl I., and Jay Sokolvsky. "Social Engamement Versus Isolation: The Case of the Aged in SRO Hotels." The Gerontologist, 20 (Feb. 1980), 36-44.

Denny, Nancy Wadsworth, and Douglas R. Denny. "Modeling Effects on the Questioning Strategies of the Elderly." Developmental Psychology, 10 (May 1974), 458.

Griffitt, William, Janet Nelson, and Glenn Littlepage. "Old Age and Response to Agreement-Disagreement." Journal of Gerontology, 27 (1972), 269-274.

Martin, William C. "Activity and Disengagement: Life Satisfaction of In-Movers into a Retirement Community." The Gerontologist, 13 (Summer 1973), 224-227.

Rinck, Christine M., Frank N. Willis, Jr., and Larry M. Dean. "Interpersonal Touch Among Residents of Homes for the Elderly." Journal of Communication, 30 (Spring 1980), 44-47

Rosow, Irving. "Old People: Their Friends and Neighbors." American Behavioral Scientist, 14 (1970), 59-69.

Rubin, Kenneth H., and Ian D. R. Brown. "A Life-Span Look at Person Perception and Its Relationship to Communicative Interaction." Journal of Gerontology, 30 (1975), 461-468.

Stevens, Joyce. "Romance in the SRO: Relationships of Elderly Men and Women in a Slum Hotel." The Gerontologist, 14 (Aug. 1974), 279-282.

Tamir, Lois M. "Communicative Interaction." In Communication and the Aging Process: Interaction throughout the Life Cycle. New York: Pergamon Press, 1979, pp. 23-46.

Tamir, Lois M. "The Social Networks of the Aged." In Communication and the Aging Process: Interaction throughout the Life Cycle. New York: Pergamon Press, 1979, pp. 112-134.

Wright, Roosevelt, and Robert F. Creecy. "Morale and Informal Activity with Friends Among Black and White Elderly." The Gerontologist, 19 (Dec. 1979), 544-547.

Unit Five: Family Communication and Aging

Unit five reviews research findings related to both marital communication and intergenerational family communication. Solutions to typical family problems are proposed. Models of effective marital and family communication are discussed.

Brown, Arnold S. "The Elderly Widowed and their Patterns of Social Participation and Disengagement." Dissertation Abstracts International, 34 (1973), 422A (University of Montana).

Harris, Audrey P. "A Study of Middle-Aged Adults and their Aging Parents in a Suburban Community." Dissertation Abstracts International, 36 (1976), 3859B (Columbia University Teachers College).

Heltsley, Mary E., and Ronald C. Powers. "Social Interaction and Perceived Adequacy of Interaction of the Rural Aged." The Gerontologist, 15 (Dec. 1975), 533-536.

Keating, Norah C., and Priscilla Cole. "What Do I Do With Him 24 Hours a Day? Changes in the Housewife Role After Retirement." The Gerontologist, 20 (Feb. 1980), 84-89.

Robertson, Joan F. "Interaction in Three Generation Families, Parents as Mediators: Toward a Theoretical Perspective." International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 6 (1975), 103-110.

Sotomayor, Marta. "A Study of Chicano Grandparents in an Urban Barrio." Dissertation Abstracts International, 34 (1974), 4419A-4420A (University of Denver).

Stinnett, Nick, Linda Mittelstel Carter, and James E. Montgomery. "Older Persons' Perceptions of Their Marriages." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 34 (Nov. 1972), 665-670.

Troll, Lillian E. "The Family of Later Life: A Decade Review." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 33 (May 1971), 263-290.

Turner, Joseph G. "Patterns of Intergenerational Exchange: A Developmental Approach." International Journal of Aging and Human Developmnent, 6 (1975), 111-115.

Yelder, Josephine E. "Generational Relationships in Black Families: Some Perceptions of Grandparent Role." Dissertation Abstracts International, 36 (1975), 1821A-1822A (University of Southern California).

Unit Six: The Taboo Topics of Death and Sexuality

Unit six explores communication surrounding the two culturally taboo topics of death and sexuality. The sexual act is viewed as an intimate communication. Factual studies concerning sexual behavior in later life are reviewed. Messages that influence sexual functioning are discussed.

The unit also surveys theory and research on counseling the dying. Special emphasis is placed on the communication issues involved in the dying process. Topics include rules that govern discussion of death, the use of euphemisms, and the interpretation of symbolic language.

Auerback, Alfred. "Sexual Patterns in Later Years of Life." Arizona Medicine, 27 (July 1970), 13-16.

CBS News, prod. Sex After Sixty. CBS Distributors, 1974. (Film of elders candidly discuss sexuality.)

Collette-Pratt, Clara. "Attitudinal Predictors of Devaluation of Old Age in a Multigenerational Sample." Journal of Gerontology, 31 (1976), 193-197. (Collette-Pratt reported that attitude toward death was an excellent predictor of devaluation of old age.)

Costello, Marilyn K. "Sex, Intimacy, and Aging." American Journal of Nursing, 75 (August 1975), 1330-1332.

Lipkin, Mark. "On Lying to Patients." Newsweek, 4 June 1979, p. 13.

Nelson, Betty Jean. "Managing the Sexual Fears of Cardiac Patients." Sexual Medicine Today, April 1978, pp. 12-15.

Saunders, Cicely. "The Moment of Truth: Care of the Dying Person." In Death and Dying: Current Issues in the Treatment of the Dying Person. Ed. Leonard Pearson. Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University, 1969.

Travris, Carol. "The Sexual Lives of Women over 60." Ms., July 1977, pp. 62-65.

Unit Seven: Mass Communication and Aging

The unit review research in mass communication and aging. Major theories of mass communication are discussed. Topics include media's portrayal of the aged, elders' viewing/listening habits, and special programming for the elderly. In-class activities include (1)replication of a research project and (2) watching and critiquing an "Over Easy" show. ("Over Easy" is broadcast by most public TV stations.)

Aronoff, Craig. "Old Age in Prime Time." Journal of Communication, 24 (Autumn 1977), 86-87.

Gantz, Walter, Howard M. Gartenberg, and Cindy K. Rainbow. "Approaching Invisibility: The Portrayal of the Elderly in Magazine Advertisements." Journal of Communication, 30 (Winter 1980), 56-60.

Gerber, George, Larry Gross, Nancy Signorielli, and Michael Morgan. "Aging with Television: Images on Television Drama and Conceptions of Social Reality." Journal of Communication, 30 (Winter 1980), 37-49.

Hess, Beth B. "Stereotypes of the Aged." Journal of Communication, 24 (Autumn 1974), 76-85.

Korzenny, Felipe, and Kimberly Neuendorf. "Television Viewing and Self-Concept of the Elderly." Journal of Communication, 30 (Winter 1980), 71-80.

Kubey, Robert W. "Television and Aging: Past, Present, and Future." The Gerontologist, 20 (Feb. 1980), 16-35.

Real, Michael R., Hayes L. Anderson, and Marilyn H. Harrington. "Television Access for Older Adults." Journal of Communication, 30 (Winter 1980), 81-88

Schreiber, Elliot S., and Douglas A. Boyd. "How the Elderly Perceive Television Commercials." Journal of Communication, 30 (Winter 1980), 61-70.

General Resources

Numerous general resources are available to aid in planning or updating a communication and aging course. The author has found the following resources particularly helpful.

"Aging and Sex Behavior [Bibliography]." Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Institute for Sex Research, 1978 (Xerox).

Allyn, Mildred V., ed. About Aging: A Catalog of Films. Los Angeles: Ethel Pery Andrus Gerontology Center, University of Southern California, 1979.

Carmichael, Carl W., and University of Oregon Center for Gerontology. "Communication, Media, and Aging: A Bibliography." Eugene, OR: University of Oregon Center for Gerontology, 1976 (Xerox).

Prince, Arlene, ed. Death and Dying: A Mediagraphy. Seattle: Health Sciences Learning Resources Center--University of Washington and Memorial Council, 1977.

Shock, Nathan W. "Current Publications in Gerontology and Geriatrics." Published as the closing article in each issue of Journal of Gerontology.